

VZCZCXRO7517
OO RUEHDE RUEHDH RUEHDIR
DE RUEHKU #1048 3071453
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 031453Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4146
INFO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD IMMEDIATE 1520
RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS KUWAIT 001048

SIPDIS

NEA/ARP, NEA/I, NEA/RA, OSD-DPMO FOR COL. D ELLIS, J. BASHAM

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ICRC-LED TEAM FINDS POSSIBLE IRAQI REMAINS FROM
GULF WAR

REF: KUWAIT 354

¶1. An ICRC-led team that included representatives from the U.S., UK, and Iraqi Embassies in Kuwait, the GOK's Ministries of Interior and Justice, and the GOK's National Committee for Missing and POW Affairs (NCMPA), on November 3 discovered bones in a desert site outside of the capital that may be Iraqi remains from the 1990-1991 Gulf War. The discovery comes as a result of an exhaustive ICRC-led (but U.S. Embassy-initiated) effort to locate Iraqi remains utilizing period British burial reports. Material uncovered on November 3 appears to include human skeletal material and portions of Republican Guard uniforms; based on the British reports, the site may contain as many as seven sets of remains. Kuwait's Interior Ministry plans to submit the remains for DNA testing. Over the next week, the GOK is expected to continue further excavation on the site and at a nearby site identified as likely to contain five corpses.

¶2. As noted reftel, the ICRC-led multilateral effort to locate the remains of Iraqi war dead inside Kuwait resulted from an Embassy initiative in March 2009 to locate possible burial sites of some 47 Iraqi soldiers killed in action in 1991 and buried by British forces. Post initiated and organized the initial survey and also provided staff from political, DAO, OMC-K and NCIS sections to assist in interpreting data and grid coordinates from 1991 British burial reports. These efforts were reviewed during the March 31 Technical Subcommittee (TSC) meeting of the Tripartite Commission, held in Kuwait. In the interim period, Embassy staff have participated in several ICRC-led multilateral efforts to locate and excavate possible burial sites. The November 3 dig represents the first actual discovery of mortal remains.

¶3. Comment: In the absence of identifying information on-site (or a DNA database of Iraqi missing which Post understands does not currently exist), it may prove difficult to determine the specific identity of those recovered. Nonetheless, both the GoK and ICRC hope that the effort being expended to find -- and where possible, identify -- Iraqi missing will encourage further reciprocal efforts by the GOI.
End comment.

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JONES